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**NEWS RELEASE**

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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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**February is Con Games Awareness Month**

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The Miami Beach Police Department would like to dedicate February as Con Game Awareness Month. Below is a synopsis of some of the most commonly used con games.

**The Pigeon Drop**

A female, male, or any combination of same, will approach you and either show you a large amount of cash or tell you about the large sum of money that they just found. The con artist may explain that whoever lost the cash must have obtained it unlawfully. He will offer to share the wealth with you, but first you will need to put up some cash in order to show your good faith. The con artist will encourage you to make a withdrawal at your local bank. In most cases the con artist does not have any cash to show you on the spot, but has had a third party approach the scammer and offer to bring you back your share as a responsible employer is holding on to the loot. If the con artist has shown you the found cash and offered to share with you on the spot, after you hand over your good faith money, then all you will find is a few small bills wrapped around a lot of nothing.

The bottom line is not to fall for any story about any found cash and sharing in the wealth.

### **Driveway and Roof Repair Scams**

A male will approach you and offer to fix that roof leak you have or seal coat your driveway. The price will be reasonable and they offer to work cheap in exchange for cash. The con artist may even have a letterhead that looks to be legitimate. Due to the low cost you may agree to have the work performed immediately.

The con artist will simply use a silver color paint to brush around the flashing making it look like he is hard at work on your roof. The con may offer to seal coat the driveway in a similar fashion and simply apply some old motor oil to the dull surface making it look good as new, until the first rain.

In either case the con really wants the cash you have hidden within your home in addition to the fee he charged for the supposed "work". Here's how he'll get it... The con will ask to use your bathroom or telephone. His partner may engage you in a conversation to distract your attention while the con roots through your dresser drawers and jewelry boxes. They know where to look and are familiar with all the "secret" hiding places most homeowners use. They can pick you clean in just minutes.

### **The Lost Puppy Scam**

Also be on the alert during summer months when you're out in your yard for a con artist family that pretends to be looking for their lost puppy.

While you are helping them find the lost puppy, some of the family members will be inside your home looking for cash and other items of value. Don't be taken by the family traveling with children as they too are part of the diversion. A popular variation of the lost puppy is to have the child ring the doorbell and beg to use the washroom. The child will appear to be in obvious distress. You let the kid in to use the bathroom while mom or dad engages you in conversation. While you are distracted the child goes through your things, pocketing cash and jewelry.

### **Meter Readers, Census Workers, Police Officers**

Also be on the look out for strangers appearing at your door purporting to be utility workers from the telephone, electric, or Gas Company. These con artists for the most part target the elderly. The con artist simply wants to gain entry and find the cash kept in the home.

Keep your distance and verify their credentials by calling their office. These innocent property crimes can go bad and turn into violent crimes. Unfortunately there are con artists that go one step further and identify themselves as police officers in order to gain entry into your home. Don't hesitate to question the identity of whomever.

Call the police and check the validity of these officers if in doubt, they will be glad to assist you and will understand your concern. Dial 911 for an emergency. Better to be Safe than to be Sorry.

It may be time to purchase an inexpensive intercom system that is easily installed. This way you don't have to have any face-to-face contact with a con artist and you can summons the police before it's too late.

### **Door to Door Sales**

Often time's con artists will try to get you to subscribe to a magazine or offer a cure for a medical condition. A con may also offer a free inspection of your home for problems with your furnace, hot water tank, appliance, or garage door. Whatever the con has to offer, simply say no and report them to your local police.

More than likely they need to have a solicitor or business license of some type from your local city hall in order to conduct such door-to-door business.

The con may even have an I.D. that appears to have been issued by your local government office. Check it carefully.

Don't get tangled in the net by these con artists that may offer to perform electrical, plumbing, and related work. Anybody can have stationery printed in no time that looks to be legitimate.

You worked too hard for your money, don't give it away.

Get a referral from a neighbor for work that needs to be performed and consult the yellow pages.

### **Fool's Gold**

A male will approach you and explain that he recently separated with his girlfriend or has recently stolen the 14K ladies ring that he now has in his hand and that he needs fast cash. The male may go on to tell you that he was just laid off from his job. The con may even tell you how the money will pay for food and a fill up for his car, as of course he just ran out of gas.

The story and the ring look pretty good. You make an offer and feel real good about the great deal you just negotiated. The only problem is that the ring is of little if any value.

### **Lotto Ticket Scam**

A con will seek you out and offer to share with you the windfall from a winning lottery ticket. The con will explain how he/she is unable to claim the winning ticket because he/she is either going through a divorce and can't claim the money or is on a work related injury and is receiving benefits that will be reduced.

The con may even have another third party involved to verify the validity of the ticket. You will in turn feel the need for greed and give the con artist a sum of cash in exchange for the winning lottery ticket.

I don't think I have to tell you the ending to this story if you have been paying attention.

**Please pass this information on to family members that may not be aware of these types of scams. Con artist scams occur throughout all neighborhoods. Just because someone appears to be legitimate and you feel a need to save or make money, don't be fooled.**

- **Don't fall for anything that sounds too good to be true - a free vacation, sweepstakes prizes, cures for cancer and arthritis, a low-risk, high-yield investment scheme.**
- **Never give your credit card, phone card, Social Security, or bank account number to anyone over the phone. It's illegal for telemarketers to ask for these numbers to verify a prize or gift.**
- **Don't let anyone rush you into signing anything - an insurance policy, a sales agreement, a contract. Read it carefully and have someone you trust check it over.**
- **Beware of individuals claiming to represent companies, consumer organizations, or government agencies that offer to recover lost money from fraudulent telemarketers for a fee.**
- **If you're suspicious, check it out with the police, the Better Business Bureau, or local consumer protection office.**

***The Miami Beach Police Department will create the safest community of its kind by being “crime fighting professionals and delivering personalized service to everyone 24/7”.***